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Key Provisions Supporting Employment Entry & Advancement for Individuals with Barriers to Employment in the House Democrat Workforce Investment Act of 2012

Reps. John Tierney (D-MA), Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX), and George Miller (D-CA) introduced legislation to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The [National Transitional Jobs Network](#) praises the efforts that went into the drafting this bill and for the bill's emphasis on improving services to meet the workforce, education and training needs of individuals with barriers to employment. We are particularly pleased by the inclusion of Transitional Jobs programs as an allowable use of training funds for individuals with barriers to employment. This is an important step forward in ensuring our public workforce system works for all. What follows is a summary of some of the key provisions in the Act supporting employment and advancement access and services for individuals experiencing barriers to employment entry and advancement.

Purposes and Principles of the Workforce Investment Act of 2012

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 demonstrates through its purposes and principles that serving the **employment and training needs of individuals with barriers to employment is a priority of the public workforce system** by listing that in part the public workforce system's purpose is "to prepare the unemployed, the under employed and those most disadvantaged with skills to match up with employer needs."

Definitions of Service Populations Include Those with Employment Barriers

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 defines the term "**persons with barriers to employment**" to include a number of indicators known to alone and in combination prevent access to and success in unsubsidized employment for individuals including those who have: "poor work history, lack of work experience or access to employment, long-term unemployment, lack of educational or occupational skills attainment, low levels of literacy or English proficiency, homelessness, ex-offender status or welfare dependency."

Supports Employment Programs for Individuals with Barriers to Employment

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 allows for up to 15 percent of funds allocated to local areas to be used for providing **Transitional Jobs strategies** for individuals with barriers to employment. These are defined as:

“time-limited work experiences in integrated settings that are subsidized and are in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors for individuals with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed, have no employment experience or have an inconsistent work history; are combined with comprehensive employment and supportive services; are designed to assist the individuals described in subparagraph (A) to establish a work history, demonstrate success in the work place, and develop the skills that lead to entry into and retention in unsubsidized employment; and assist in placement or hiring to an unsubsidized job.”

Supports Innovation Projects in Employment, Training and Education Service Delivery

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 establishes Workforce Innovation and Best Practices Grants administered by the Secretary in order to “promote the development of comprehensive workforce investment systems at the State, regional and local levels that reflect the alignment of strategies and activities across the core programs and, where appropriate, across other workforce development, education, economic development, and human services programs, to provide effective, high quality, and client-centered services to job seekers and workers, youth, and employers and to **promote innovation and to improve replicate and expand models and service delivery strategies of demonstration effectiveness in meeting the education, training, employment needs of job seekers and works, and youth including such individuals with barriers to employment**, and employers.”

Accounts for Economic Conditions & Participant Characteristics in Designing Performance Measures

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 requires that that state performance **levels are adjusted and take into account state economic conditions and the characteristics of participants** “when the participants enter the program involved, including indicators of poor work history, lack of work experience lack of educational or occupational skills attainment, dislocation from high-wage and high-benefit employment, low levels of literacy or English proficiency, disability status, homelessness, ex-offender status and welfare dependency.”

Increases Access to Training Services

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 **clarifies that** individuals can move immediately into training services if eligible. It also allows for a wider range of training strategies.
- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 **strengthens the priority of service for low-income adults and those with barriers to employment** seeking intensive and training services through the WIA adult funding stream.
- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 requires that the “number and percentage of **participants and youth with barriers to employment** who received services from a one-stop partner program resulting in entry into an education and training program that leads to employment or a recognized postsecondary credential” be one of **the minimum indicators of expanded access to public workforce training services**.

Increased Priority on Aligning Work and Education Activities

- The Workforce Investment Act of 2012 encourages concurrent work and education activities by:
 - Establishing that the use of funds in Title II should not be construed as “**to prohibit or discourage the use of funds for adult education and literacy** activities that help eligible individuals transition to and succeed in postsecondary education, including credit-bearing coursework and training or employment for concurrent enrollment activities.”

- Requiring each eligible agency to use funds to support the **“alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners.”**
- Allowing for each eligible agency to use funds made available for **“the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers and activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.”**
- **Developing a shared system of accountability across the core programs which encourages programs to support attainment of postsecondary credentials, employment and other long-term goals, including for those with low basic skills,**

[The National Transitional Jobs Network](#) and our membership praise the efforts of Mr. Tierney, Hinojosa and Miller for the Workforce Investment Act of 2012 emphasis on supporting the workforce, education and training needs of individuals with barriers to employment through the bill which is clearly reflected in the inclusion of Transitional Jobs programs as an allowable use of training dollars, performance measures that take into account the characteristics of individuals with barriers to employment, and the integration of employment, education and training services to support pathways to good jobs for low-income individuals. This Act is a promising step in the right direction for individuals with barriers to employment and reflects our interests in ensuring that America is a place where [everyone gets a fair shot at accessing and succeeding in employment](#).

Additional Resources:

- National Transitional Jobs Network [Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization recommendations](#)
- [Workforce Investment Act of 2012 Bill Text](#)
- [U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Education and the Workforce Democrats Fact Sheet on the Workforce Investment Act of 2012](#)

The National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN), a project of Heartland Alliance, is a coalition of city, state, and federal policy makers; community workforce organizations; and anti-poverty nonprofit service providers and advocacy organizations committed to advancing and strengthening Transitional Jobs (TJ) programs around the country so that people with barriers to employment can gain success in the workplace and improve their economic lives and the economic conditions of their communities. Together we ensure that policies will account for the hard-to-employ, that the public understands the need to invest in these services, that programs are able to effectively serve as many people as possible, and that best practices and technical assistance are widely shared and implemented across the country. The NTJN is the singular national clearinghouse for resources, tools, and expertise for building Transitional Jobs programs, is the primary organization for gathering and disseminating best practices to improve the model nationally, and leads the national dialogue about employment and advancement strategies for the hard to employ. The NTJN is the national voice for stakeholders working to help the hardest to employ get and keep jobs.